

Story 692 (1974, Tapes 50 & 51)

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kaza of Mersin,
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Gurap Castle¹

One day when our Prophet was sitting in his mescit,² he asked his friends this question: "Do you know about Gurap Castle?"

"O Blessed Prophet," they answered, "we have just now heard its name for the first time and so we have never seen it

There was in that community then a man named Hatip.³ Mohammed could not see him anywhere among the congregation gathered there, and so he asked, "Did Hatip not come to the mescit today?" Some of the people went to bring Hatip to the gathering, and when he arrived, Mohammed asked him, "Why didn't you come to prayers today?"

"O Prophet," he answered, "my children have been without food for three days. That is the reason I have not come to pray."

¹Gurap or Gurab Castle is apparently an imaginary or mythical place that figures occasionally in religious legends about Mohammed and his contemporaries. In such tales many of the characters and places are difficult to document.

²A mescit is a small private mosque, often within the grounds of a castle or mansion.

³Hatip as a common noun means preacher or orator. Whether the proper name here is meant to have any such overtones is not clear.

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"Well, what I wanted to ask you is this: Have you ever heard about Gurap Castle?"

"Sir, I once spent ten years in that place. I was not a Moslem at the time but an infidel."

"Well, tell us about it, then."

"Well, there is in that castle a ^{plot area} tree called Zatül-enver,⁴ and that tree is the god of the people who live there. The residents of that castle worship that tree.

Mohammed then directed his friends in the mescit, "Go and bring dates and wheat and other foods so that this friend and his children may eat." The congregation all left, and when they returned a short while later, the people placed all of their contributions before the Prophet. After Mohammed had prayed over this food, he asked Hatip to take it home. The remarkable thing about this food was that it could not be diminished. As soon as some of it was consumed, that amount would immediately be miraculously replenished. ^{maybe object}

Mohammed then said to Hatip, "I am going to appoint an expedition to explore Gurap Castle, and you are to be its guide. I want the group to inspect it thoroughly. I shall appoint Hubbad, Ömrü Müheyve,⁵ and three others, and you will

⁴Zat in Turkish can mean essence or person, and so the name might suggest pure essence or pure person.

⁵Hubbad is sometimes called Ubbad by the narrator. Neither Hubbad nor Ömrü Müheyve is mentioned in the standard biographies of Mohammed.

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serve as guide. Go and inspect Gurap Castle and then return. Observe its interior; make note of all the roads leading to that place; walk through all its grounds. But be wary of the ⁵⁹⁻⁷⁶giant who lives in that special tree, for it is the giant who makes the inhabitants of the castle behave so wildly."

[Narrator: The giant used to cry out from the branches of that tree, and the people would worship him, crying, "Allah! Allah!" The trunk of that tree was so thick that three rolls of hemp rope could barely stretch around it. Each of its leaves was as large as a prayer rug.]⁶

The group set out on its journey, traveling one, three, five days until they reached a place in the desert where they decided to rest. After a while they looked out from their resting place and saw crawling along the surface of the desert at some distance a strange dark creature. At first they could not determine what it was. Ömrü Müheyye then said to his companions, "You stay here, and I shall go and take a look to find out just what that thing is.

⁶It is always difficult to know (especially in religious tales) whether such narrative intrusions contain materials that the narrator had inadvertently omitted earlier or whether the narrator, carried away by his own story, invented these details en route.

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This Ömrü Müheyze was a man capable of catching birds in flight, so quick was he in all his movements. He approached the object moving across the desert, and as he got nearer, he saw that it was a small caravan of two camels led by a woman on horseback. "Who are you?" he called out to her.

"What is that to you? If you will take an oath not to touch me, I shall tell you who I am.

"I swear that I shall not harm you. Tell me who you are."

The woman said, "These camels are loaded with presents for the king of Gurap Castle. They are loaded with solid gold ingots and with crowns decorated with jewels."

Ömrü Müheyze thought about this briefly and concluded that such good infidel booty would be ⁷helâl for him to rob. Quickly striking the woman a hard blow, he knocked her off her horse. Then he started to lead the camels back toward the place where his companions were resting.

But the woman had arisen by now, and catching up with him, she began to implore him to return his camels. Pitying the woman, Ömrü Müheyze was off guard. "How could a brave man do such a thing as this?" she asked

This woman carried a stick hidden within her clothing. It was so sharp and hard that if she struck a rock with it,

⁷Not forbidden by religious law.

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it would split that rock as easily as a strong knife would. While imploring Ömrü Müheyve, the woman secretly lowered this stick down her sleeve. While Ömrü Müheyve gazed at the woman, not suspecting anything, she dealt him such a sharp blow on the head that he fell from his horse unconscious. After giving him a few kicks, she took the string from his bow used it to tie his hands. She then hoisted him onto the back of one of the camels, and left that place, continuing onward toward Gurap Castle

After his companions had waited for a long while for the return of Ömrü Müheyve, one of them, Hubbad, said, "Let me go and see what happened to him. If I do not return, you had better go back home without trying to search for me." When Hubbad reached the place in the desert where they had first seen the dark shape crawling along, he found the stringless bow of Ömrü Müheyve, and he then knew that his friend had been captured.

In the meantime, the woman, suspecting that Ömrü Müheyve had friends who would soon be searching for him, changed route. She headed toward the mountains, which she crossed one by one in order to avoid open plains where she might be seen from a distance. When Ömrü Müheyve finally opened his eyes, he realized, as he was reviving, that he was hanging down the back of a camel. He asked the woman to free him,

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she refused, saying, "I know now who you are. You are Ömrü Müheyve, a very treacherous fellow. Whom do you think can cheat now? I shall take you to the ruler of Gurap Castle, and he will probably sacrifice you to the Zatül-enver tree, which is our god."

Hubbad, riding from mountain to mountain, reached Gurap Castle before the woman did. There were 200 sentries posted around the castle, and these guards quickly caught Hubbad when he approached the castle. "Who are you?" they asked him.

"I am Ömrü bin Havlan (which was the name of a distant king at that time)."

"Oh, we have often heard your name spoken, but we had never met you before," said the sentries, all of whom shook hands with him.⁸ They then reported his arrival to their Captain, explaining, "We thought that we had caught someone who was a Moslem, but it turned out to be Ömrü bin Havlan."

"Bring him here to me." And when he was brought into office, the Captain also shook hands with him

They were now about to take him into the interior of the castle. Our Master [Mohammed] had warned the group

⁸All of the handshaking in this story must surely be anachronistic. At this very early date handshaking was not such a common practice.

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before it had set forth that the Zatül-enver tree gave forth much smoke from its top and that the giant who lived in the tree could sense when a Moslem had entered the castle.

"But do not worry about this," Mohammed had said. "Simply recite the Yasin sura,⁹ because giants are terrified by that sura."

Taking Hubbad to be Ömrü bin Havlan, they ushered him through the castle. Smoke at once rose from the tree, and the inhabitants of the castle kissed the ground when they saw this smoke. As smoke continued to rise from the tree, the inhabitants started running from it, fearing that it was very angry at something. Hubbad then recited the Yasin chapter from the Koran, and the smoke subsided at once. Gathering again at the foot of the tree, the inhabitants said, "Our god is again in a happy mood," and they went on with their worship

The guards now took Hubbad to their king, saying, "Your Majesty, we at first thought him to be a Moslem, but he is Ömrü bin Havlan

The king welcomed him and asked his guest, "What has brought you such a great distance to this country?"

Hubbad answered, "I formerly had a servant whom I loved

⁹The Yasin sura is the Yasin chapter of the Koran, chapter 36. To the lay reader there is nothing in this chapter that suggests control of giants or other ogres.

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as a son, but this ungrateful man stole much of my personal property and disappeared. Determined to catch him and punish him, I have traveled widely searching for him, and that is what has brought me here. I knew that tomorrow is a very sacred day in the religion of this region, and so I thought perhaps the man I sought might be here

The king of the castle ordered that lambs be slaughtered on the occasion of Ömrü bin Havlan's visit. The lambs were slaughtered and stuffed as the king and his guest sat talking. Soon a messenger arrived and reported, "O King, Daye¹⁰ has returned from her journey. She has with her a prisoner from the tribe of Mohammed."

Hubbad heard this, and he also heard the conversation followed between the king and Daye. The king ran to the castle gate and saw the woman approaching leading the camels. She said to the king, "By trickery this fellow here robbed me of the presents I was bringing for you, and so I took him prisoner. Let us make a sacrifice out of him for our god."

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The king asked the prisoner, "Are you really Ömrü Müheyve?"¹¹

¹⁰The name of the woman who had captured Ömrü Müheyve.

¹¹The narrator omitted the woman's having informed the king that her captive was Ömrü Müheyve, but obviously this information must have been imparted to him.

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I am.

"How is it that you have been taken prisoner by this woman?"

"Well, it must have been my God-given destiny,^{Kismet} so written on my forehead from time immemorial."¹²

"Well, who is there who will save you from my hand now? I shall slaughter you for the Zatül-enver tree.

"If you are going to slaughter me, I shall fly away. I have a hoca [Mohammed who knows what is happening to me. I believe that he will both save me and capture this castle."

you still talking in that fashion?" Then, turning to some servants, he ordered, "Take that man down from the camel!" And the servants did as they had been ordered.

king had an uncle named Ebu Naçe who had accepted Islam secretly but had been unable to leave the castle. Ebu Naçe said to the king, "O King, this fellow is too lean to make a proper sacrifice to your god. Let us not slaughter him now but rather fatten him first and then later slaughter him, if that is what is to be done. I shall be willing to fatten him myself." (He was a Moslem, this Ebu Naçe, but he

¹²It is a Moslem belief that one's destiny, decided long before one was even born, is written on one's forehead. This destiny or kismet (kismet) can be read by those with spiritual insight. Parents sometimes extract a confession of guilt for an offense by threatening a child to expose him by reading the truth from the child's forehead.

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kept this fact a secret at the castle. Ebu Naçe took the prisoner into his own custody and took him home with him. From a short distance away Hubbad observed this.

The king then returned to where Hubbad sat and said, "Your presence here has brought us much good fortune."

"How is that?"

"Daye has just arrived with a prisoner from the tribe of Mohammed. The man is one of Mohammed's most important, trusted, and swift messengers."

The two men sat down together again. For some time they sat there eating and talking. Then there was a great noise outside and someone shouted, "O King, why are you still sitting there?"

Looking toward the armoury where the noise was coming from, the king saw that weapons were being distributed to soldiers. He said to Hubbad, "My apologies to you! This is the day I am to lead an expedition against Mohammed, but you may remain here while I am gone. In fact, I shall leave the castle under your command." He then told his subjects to serve Hubbad just as they had served him. How could he know who Hubbad really was? He thought him to be Ömrü bin Havlan.

The king prepared to depart and Hubbad took command of the castle. When Hubbad sat on the throne that evening,

the inhabitants gathered there, including the woman who had captured Ömrü Müheyye. She recognized who Hubbad was when she saw him sitting on the king's throne. As soon as she saw him, she closed her eyes and turned back. Hubbad observed this and sensed that she had recognized him. He said to those who had gathered there, "Depart, O friends! I am tired and shall sleep now

After they had all gone, the woman went to the castle gate where the king and his troops were ready to leave. She asked, "O King, where are you going?"

"I am starting out on an expedition against Mohammed.

"Do you actually know that fellow whom you have left in command during your absence? He is Hubbad, the closest friend of Mohammed. His full name is Beşiroğlu Hubbad. This woman was, in fact, a spy

"Do not say that!"

"Well, it is true."

"Oh, I could have lost my realm and my castle!" The king led his troops back to the castle and entered the palace, but there was no one there. Hubbad had escaped. "The man I left on my throne," said the king, "was a Moslem! He has apparently escaped! Whoever can capture him and bring him back will be rewarded generously!"

They lighted candles and searched everywhere for Hubbad

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(Of course, they had no gasoline lanterns in those days such as we have now.¹³) The gate of the castle was locked.

Ebu Naçe heard about this. Ömrü Müheyve, as you know, was already with him. Ebu Naçe said to himself, "If this Moslem ever escapes from the castle, he will have to do so by passing through the gate." He therefore took a piece of paper, wrote on it, "Allah is the only God, and Mohammed is His Prophet,"¹⁴ and placed it on a seat beside the gate. He supposed that whoever passed through the gate would surely see this and pick it up.

Hubbad, slipping through passages in the castle, finally came to the gate. When he saw someone waiting there, he felt sure that he would now be caught. Seeing the piece of paper with the statement written upon it, he reached toward it and tried to pick it up, but the man waiting there grabbed it first. He said to that man, "I am Beşiroğlu Hubbad."

Ebu Naçe took him and hid him in the same place that he was keeping Ömrü Müheyve hidden. The two Moslems quickly exchanged news about themselves. They were not the only Moslems there, for Ebu Naçe had forty Moslem warriors hidden

¹³This kind of informative interpolation is not uncommon in Turkish tales.

¹⁴Lâilâhe illâlah [ve] Muhammeder-resulullah. --This is the statement which one must repeat in order to become a Moslem.

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in his quarters. The infidels had no knowledge of this. When he had become a Moslem, he had not revealed this fact to anyone, and there were no messengers moving between himself and Mohammed.

The woman Daye kept watch on Ebu Naçe, however. She was so shrewd that she could detect a footprint on a rock in the dark. She traced the footprints of Hubbad to the house of Ebu Naçe, and she reported this at once to the king: "Your uncle is hiding the enemy."

They beat upon this man's door. Ebu Naçe came out and saw the king and soldiers with drawn swords waiting for him. "What is the meaning of this, O King?" he asked.

The fellow whom I left in my bed is a Moslem! If you are keeping him here in your house, give him up to me! She [Daye has traced his footprints to your door. I have often heard that Mohammed's soldiers could fly through the air because they feed on barley bread."¹⁵

The woman said, "Keep your words to yourself! I could detect his hiding place even if he were seven levels deep in the earth or seven levels up in heaven!"¹⁶ The enemy is in your uncle's house!"

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¹⁶This echoes Islamic cosmology.

The king started walking away, but the woman followed him and caught him by the arm, insisting that he enter Ebu Naçe's house. To herself she said, "If the enemy is not found in that house, the king will tear me to pieces." She said

within her own mind because there had begun a great argument among the king's followers. Some said that the enemy was in Ebu Naçe's house, while others said that he was not. Finally it was agreed that Ebu Naçe's house should first be searched, and then after that the woman should either be rewarded or punished.

At this, Ebu Naçe said, "Let me go in first. My children and family are all asleep, and so I should go to them before enter." When he went inside, he quickly informed the Moslems, who arose and dressed at once. Ebu Naçe said to them, "I became a Moslem without ever having seen Mohammed. If any one of you survives, give my greetings to the Prophet and ask him to bless me. None of you must come out until I am dead."

"No!" said Hubbad. "It is necessary for all of us to go out with you--all forty-two of us!"

As the king stood at the door waiting for Hubbad to come it was Ebu Naçe instead who appeared, shouting, "Allah is the only God, and Mohammed is his Prophet!" Shouting this, Ebu Naçe drew his sword and started slashing to right and to left. When the soldiers saw this, many of them started

to flee, but the king became ^{anger} furious, shouting, "Strike my uncle! Strike my uncle!"

After the fighting had gone on for some time, twenty of the forty Moslem soldiers had been killed in the battle, and there were only twenty left.¹⁷ At that point Ebu Naçe paused momentarily and said to his friends, "Let us absolve each other of all indebtedness."¹⁸ This they did. *Helal*

Not long after that, the castle gate opened, and more troops began to move inside. Ebu Naçe realized that other infidel troops from outside had now reached the castle. These troops had not come to relieve the personal soldiers of the king but were on their way to participate in the

¹⁷Although there were forty soldiers hidden in Ebu Naçe's house, the whole Moslem force, whom he is addressing here numbered forty-three, himself and the two recently arrived Moslems also being among the fighting force. If twenty had been killed, there should be twenty-three Moslems still alive. This is a mere technicality, however, and does not damage the tale at all.

¹⁸In Islam a dying person is asked by all of his/her relatives and friends to absolve or forgive them of all indebtedness of all kinds--not just indebtedness in terms of money, wealth, property, or physical things. Any indebtedness not absolved, forgiven, or (in Moslem terms) "made helâl" will be an offense to be accounted for before Allah on the day of Judgment. The Turkish expression, used here for "Let us mutually acquit each other of any claim" is *helâl laşmak*. This concept is very important not only to strict Moslems but also to those who are only nominal Moslems.

attack on Mohammed when they decided to take time to visit Gurap Castle to receive the blessings of their god. When Ebu Naçe saw these troops entering the castle, he said to his friends, "It seems likely now that we shall all be killed."

These newly arrived troops were commanded by Abdikilal who immediately presented himself to the king. "O Abdikilal, where are you going?" asked the king.

"I am going on an expedition against Mohammed."

"What is your objective in this expedition?"

"I intend to kill Mohammed and capture his nephew, Ali."

The king said, "You have no idea of what is going on in this world. Doomsday is commencing right here! The battle has started. My uncle hid two of the enemy in his house, and they have already killed so many of my soldiers!"

Abdikilal said, "O my King, you stay here and let me handle this matter." Going to Ebu Naçe, he asked, "Why are you causing all this trouble? Come! Deliver those two enemies to me! Then I shall gain prestige with the king, and you will be allowed to leave the castle."

Then Ebu Naçe said, "I cannot deliver into your hands followers of Mohammed to be left here. I shall not surrender them up as long as there is any life left in me!" Returning inside then, he said to his companions, "Friends, let us say farewell to each other once more. Apparently Mohammed has

not received word of our situation here."

As he said this, however, a loud cry was heard from one corner of the castle: "O Ebu Naçe, I am Gais Pehlivan!¹⁹ Fear not, for I am here!"

Soon after that a loud voice called from another corner of the castle: "O Ebu Naçe, fear not! I am Esvedoğlu Mikdat,²⁰ and I am here!"

Then from another corner of the castle came a cry: "O Ebu Naçe, fear not! I am Halit,²¹ the destroyer of infidel lands. I am here!"

Then still another cry was heard, this one descending directly from above in the voice of the Blessed Ali²²: 73-75
"I am he who broke the gate of Hayber Castle, the one who destroyed Enterib in a single blow!" As Ali descended, he shouted: "O Halit, what are you waiting for? Strike!" As

¹⁹Although pehlivan usually means wrestler, it can also mean warrior, as it does here.

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²²Hazreti (Blessed) Ali was to become the fourth Caliph to become the Commander of the Faithful after the death of Mohammed.

The roll call of boastful warriors pledging their support is reminiscent of several passages in The Book of Dede Korkut when the Oğuz beys rally in support of Kazan, the Bey of Beys.

descended into the middle of the castle, Abdikilal, who had claimed that he would capture this enemy, stood just gazing at him.

The king of the castle spoke to Abdikilal, saying, "You have proven to be even worse than my uncle! It is you have brought this trouble upon us. With your arrival also came these fellows!"

"No, my king, I had never seen those two who had arrived earlier," said Abdikilal. "As we were approaching the castle, I remember seeing those who now appear as Ali and his troops, and I meant to ask them who they were, but just I looked and beheld them coming down through the air. Apparently they are the true representatives of Allah!" Saying this, he went to Ali and kissed his hand. He too became a Moslem.

The Prophet then hoisted his flags and marched with his troops to the gate of Gurap Castle. Ali went and tore away the gate. Mohammed entered and planted his standards. He then gave this order: "Do not kill anyone who surrenders his arms. Kill only those who do not surrender!"

Shortly after this, Ali caught the king and had him tied. Ali then said to his own men, "Gather all of the gold that has been paid as tax [offering to the tree--both gold and jewels." There was so much gold laid upon the tree that even the knots were covered with gold. Ali also ordered,

"Clear away a space here within the castle." As a space was being cleared, Ali stood with his sword, Zülfikar,²³ in his hand. When the space had been cleared, he struck the tree a mighty blow with Zülfikar.

The giant inside the tree was shrieking, "Let me Let me out!" As Ali struck again, his sword penetrated the tree and cut the giant in half at the waist. When the tree now fell to the ground, Ali turned to the king of the castle and said, "Do you see what has happened to your god? he now give you bread and water? . You can see that he is just a dried tree trunk. In its time a tree sprouts and grows branches and leaves; later it sheds its leaves, dries up, and disappears. You have now seen what it was that you worshiped as your god. Come and become a Moslem so that no one else may rule in your castle! Continue to rule and to sit upon your throne as a Moslem padişah!"

The king responded, "I cannot accept your offer, even if you should cut me to pieces!"

As the king spoke in this manner, his head was chopped off with a mighty sword blow. When the Prophet turned round and looked, he saw that it was the king's own son who had struck that deadly blow. "Why did you do that?" our Prophet

²³One of the great legendary swords of all time, Zülfikar was Ali's magical, double-tipped weapon which gave him victory in most of his many battles.

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asked. "Is he not your own father?"

"O Prophet of Allah, I killed him because he was totally lacking in the virtue that you possess."

Following this, they gathered up everything and returned to Medina